

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5123
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SHUM, MO
SUBJ: INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS: POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT CHANGES AND THE
SECOND PARLIAMENTARY SESSION

REF: RABAT 0257

1. SUMMARY: PARLIAMENT'S SECOND SESSION OPENS APRIL 14 AMIDST
RUMORS OF A POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT CHANGE AND PARTICIPATION BY THE
LEFT. USFP HAS CALLED FOR PRIMIN OSMAN'S REPLACEMENT AS ONE
CONDITION FOR PARTICIPATION, WHICH IS BY NO MEANS ASSURED.
THE PRO-GOVERNMENT INDEPENDENTS WILL NOT FORM A PARTY FOR THE
MOMENT. PARTICULARLY WHILE EXTERNAL PRESSURES PERSIST, ALL OF THE
COUNTRY'S MAJOR POLITICAL ELEMENTS ARE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO
PARTICIPATE IN MOROCCO'S DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES. END SUMMARY

2. SETTING: AS PARLIAMENT PREPARES TO REOPEN FOR ITS SPRING SESSION
ON APRIL 14, ACTIVITY AMONG MOROCCO'S PRINCIPAL POLITICAL FORCES
HAS HEIGHTENED. THE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY PERSISTENT
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RUMORS OF A CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT
OF PRIMIN OSMAN AND ENTRY OF THE MODERATE LEFT OPPOSITION SOCIALIST
UNION OF POPULAR FORCES (USFP). WHILE THE GOVERNING ELITE IS
BREATHING EASIER IN THE WAKE OF THE ELECTORAL DEFEAT OF THE FRENCH
LEFT, THE STAGE SEEMS SET FOR AT LEAST SOME COSMETIC CHANGES
IN FAVOR OF THE LEFT TO BLUNT INTERNAL CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENTAL
POLICY AND TO WIDEN MOROCCO'S SUPPORT IN INTERNATIONAL FORA BY

PUTTING FORTH A MORE "PROGRESSIVE" IMAGE IN THE NEXT ROUNDS OF SAHARA DIPLOMACY. THE GOM'S HANDLING OF CURRENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS HAS ALSO COME UNDER SHARP ATTACK FROM THE LEFT. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE WORRISOME RUMBLINGS IN LABOR SECTORS CONTROLLED BY USFP.

3. PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES: AMONG NUMEROUS EXCHANGES BETWEEN MOROCCAN PARLIAMENTARIANS AND THEIR COUNTERPARTS ABROAD, DELEGATIONS WENT TO MAURITANIA, IRAQ, ZAIRE, EGYPT, AND TO THE IPU MEETING IN LISBON. SEVERAL OTHER COUNTRIES (INCLUDING THE U.S.-RABAT 0365) SENT DELEGATIONS TO RABAT. JUSTIFICATION OF MOROCCO'S SAHARA POSITION DOMINATED MOROCCAN DEPUTIES' CONTACTS WITH THEIR COUNTERPARTS.

4. THE NEXT SESSION: ALTHOUGH THE PARLIAMENT'S COMMISSIONS WERE THEORETICALLY FUNCTIONING BETWEEN SESSIONS, THERE IS AS YET VERY LITTLE PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO STUDY. THE GOVERNMENT HAS THUS FAR PROPOSED ONLY TWO MINOR ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS. EXPECTATIONS HAD BEEN THAT THE PARLIAMENT WOULD DEVOTE MUCH OF THE COMING SESSION TO THE NEXT FIVE YEAR PLAN, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT YET READY TO PRESENT IT OTHER THAN POSSIBLY IN THE FORM OF A BROAD OVERVIEW SUMMARY, AND HAS IN ANY CASE NOT REVEALED WHEN THE PLAN WOULD BE SUBMITTED FOR DETAILED DISCUSSION. THE LEFT IN PARTICULAR IS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF PERCEIVED GOVERNMENT INACTIVITY IN THE LEGISLATIVE FIELD.

5. THE INDEPENDENTS: THE PRO-GOVERNMENT INDEPENDENTS OF PARLIAMENT
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HELD THEIR TWICE POSTPONED COLLOQUIUM IN RABAT MARCH 24-26 UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRIMIN OSMAN. AS EXPECTED, NO IMMEDIATE DECISION WAS TAKEN TO FORM A PARTY. HOWEVER, COMMISSIONS WERE FORMED, MANIFESTOS DRAWN UP, AND CONSIDERABLE INTERNAL MANEUVERING OCCURRED AMONG THE GROUP'S DIVERSE ELEMENTS. A NATIONAL CONGRESS IS EXPECTED IN LATE SUMMER, BEFORE THE FALL SESSION OF PARLIAMENT, AND THERE MAY BE AN ATTEMPT BETWEEN NOW AND THEN TO MOVE TOWARD FORMATION OF A PARTY. FOR THE MOMENT, THE INDEPENDENTS REMAIN A "GROUPING," WITH ITS SEVERAL DIFFERING TENDENCIES DUE MORE TO THE PERSONALITIES OF LEADING "NOTABLES" THAN TO PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES OR GRADATIONS IN LOYALTY TO THE GOVERNMENT. THE DISCIPLINE OF THIS 141 MEMBER GROUPING (OUT OF A TOTAL OF 264 DEPUTIES IN PARLIAMENT) CAN BE EXPECTED TO HOLD AND, ALONG WITH MOUVEMENT POPULAIRE'S 44 SEATS, WILL GUARANTEE THE GOVERNMENT A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY WHEN REQUIRED.

6. USFP: THE BIG QUESTION MARK AT THE MOMENT IS USFP. THE KING CONVOKED USFP LEADER BOUABID ABOUT A MONTH AGO AND AGAIN ASKED HIM TO ENTER THE GOVERNMENT. WHILE THE RUMOR MILL INITIALLY TREATED USFP PARTICIPATION AS A CERTAINTY, BOUABID JARRED OBSERVERS IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED APRIL 6 IN WHICH HE POSED TWO CONDITIONS: REPLACEMENT OF OSMAN AS PRIMIN AND MODIFICATION OF THE

GOM'S PROGRAM, ALREADY ADOPTED IN THE LAST PARLIAMENTARY SESSION. BOUABID WAS UNUSUALLY CRITICAL OF OSMAN, WHOM HE CHARGED WITH PERSONALLY RIGGING THE JUNE 1977 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. ONE SENIOR PARTY OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFFS THAT THIS WAS IN EFFECT USFP'S "RESPONSE" TO THE KING'S OFFER, AND WENT ON TO MAINTAIN THAT USFP PARTICIPATION WAS STILL FAR FROM CERTAIN. BOUABID ALSO MADE PEJORATIVE ALLUSIONS TO ISTIQLAL'S ELECTION "SELLOUT" TO THE AUTHORITIES, AND THESE COMMENTS HAVE EXACERBATED THE GROWING POLEMIC BETWEEN USFP AND ISTIQLAL, TO THE DELIGHT OF INDEPENDENT LEADERS. MEANWHILE, USFP HAS BEEN MAKING PROGRESS IN THE LABOR FIELD, AND ITS UNIONS HAVE ENGAGED IN STRIKES IN THE PHOSPHATE AND TEACHING SECTORS (CASABLANCA 0493 NOTAL). ISTIQLAL, WHICH HOLDS ALL THE EDUCATION PORTFOLIO, IS CONVINCED THAT THE TEACHER STRIKES ARE DESIGNED TO DISCREDIT IT AND ITS PRESS IS CONFIDENTIAL

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REACTING STRONGLY.

7. ISTIQLAL: WHILE ISTIQLAL ON THE ONE HAND WOULD LIKE TO SEE USFP IN THE GOVERNMENT TO SHARE BLAME FOR ANY DEFICIENCIES, IT VIEWS WITH NERVOUSNESS THE PROSPECT OF USFP COMPETITION FOR IMPORTANT PORTFOLIOS. ISTIQLAL HAS SCHEDULED A NATIONAL CONGRESS APRIL 21-23 -- AFTER PARLIAMENT KICKS OFF -- AND WILL UNDOUBTEDLY TAKE STOCK OF DEVELOPMENTS AT THAT TIME. IT IS DIFFICULT, HOWEVER, TO ENVISION ANY SCENARIO WHICH WOULD CAUSE IT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE TIME BEING.

8. COMMENT: IT IS AT THIS WRITING UNCLEAR WHETHER THE KING WILL IN THE NEAR FUTURE ALTER THE SHAPE OF HIS TEAM FOR THE NEW EXIGENCIES OF COMING MONTHS. HE HAS MADE A RECENT EFFORT TO CONCENTRATE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WHILE REMAINING ABOVE INTERNAL POLITICS, INTERVENING IN THE LATTER AREA ONLY OCCASIONALLY, AS IN THE CASE OF HIS STRONG STAND AGAINST ISTIQLALI EFFORTS TO PUSH ARABIZATION. USFP LEADER BOUABID'S TOUGH POSITION HAS COMPLICATED THE KING'S AIM OF A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY, AND IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER HE WILL BE WILLING TO PAY USFP'S PRICE FOR A COALITION. WHATEVER THE FUTURE SHAPE OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE KING WILL CONTINUE TO RELY HEAVILY ON HIS TEAM OF PALACE SUPER-COUNSELORS TO ADVISE HIM ON THE COUNTRY'S IMPORTANT DECISIONS. VIEWED IN THIS LIGHT, THE DIVISION OF MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS WILL BE LESS IMPORTANT IN DETERMINING HOW THE COUNTRY IS RUN THAN IN INSURING THAT ITS MAJOR ELEMENTS CONTINUE TO PLAY THE POLITICAL GAME. PARTICULARLY WHILE EXTERNAL PRESSURES, SUCH AS THE SAHARA ISSUE, FORCE THE PARTIES TO CLOSE RANKS, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THEY WILL OPT TO REMAIN IN THE GAME.

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